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ABSTRACT

"Fun activities," such as games, puzzles, discussions, debates, drama, and art, are used in every unit of the Chicago Mastery Learning Reading/Learning Strategies program. Activities include (1) ungraded optional activities, (2) enrichment activities, and (3) subject-related applications. These materials aid in comprehension, memory, and transfer; provide a break from routine; and provide enrichment materials that go beyond the literal and inferential aspects of the mastery objectives into critical and reflective areas for students who are at or above grade level. (Sample activities are included.) (DF)

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INCORPORATING FUN ACTIVITIES WITHIN MASTERY LEARNING UNITS

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CS005478

INCORPORATING FUN ACTIVITIES WITHIN MASTERY LEARNING UNITS

Fun activities form an integral part of the Chicago Mastery Learning Reading/Learning Strategies (CMLR/LS) and are incorporated in every unit for instructional purposes. They are special in that they depart from the format of the regular Student Activities. Fun activities consist of games, puzzles, discussions, debates, drama, art, etc. There are three types of fun activities: a) Ungraded Optional Activities (OPS), b) Enrichment Activities (EA), and c) Subject-Related Applications (APPS). Including these high-interest, provocative, and creative materials serves three purposes: 1) to aid in comprehension, memory, and transfer for all students, 2) to provide a break from the pencil-and-paper routine of the regular activities, and 3) to provide enrichment materials that go beyond the literal and inferential aspects of the objectives into the critical and reflective areas for students who are at or beyond grade level. These three types of fun activities will be described in terms of their placement, criteria, and range, and an example of each will be given.

Rationale

Analysis of the summative (end-of-cycle) tests for our fifth and sixth graders yielded some surprising results: while the experimental students using CMLR/LS materials markedly outperformed the control students using basal readers, the average scores of both groups were below passing. These results were puzzling because the CMLR/LS student had not only consistently passed most of the Formative Tests but also had done so with unusually high scores. One explanation could be that the Formative Tests scores were poorly conceived. But interviews with teachers and item analysis suggested otherwise.

Or perhaps the problem was the end-of-cycle test itself. The test had only been completed in the fall of 1977 and spring of 1978 was the first large-scale implementation. Citywide correlational analyses (Brandis, 1978) revealed that the test had only a .15 correlation with the citywide reading comprehension scores. Brandis concluded that the reason for this exceedingly low correlation was the excessive number of items from the Study Skill Strand, compared to the number of Comprehension and Literature items on the test. Thus, it was likely that the end-of-cycle test did not really measure comprehension.

Although we accepted Brandis' reasoning, we were still left with the problem: that the average CMLR/LS score on the test was below passing. We concluded that the problem was most likely to be a memory problem. The students had learned how to do each problem at the time of each Formative Test but forgot some of the vocabulary or strategies at the time of the end-of-cycle test, several months later. If this was true, then we should provide activities which would serve as memory pegs for each concept and skill to be learned.

Several theories of learning and retention suggested that using games and manipulatives might facilitate long term memory. Piaget (1970), for example, argues that games and manipulatives are crucial to the development of any skill. Underwood (1970) shows that the more senses (auditory, visual, oral, tactile-motor, olfactary) used for a learning task, the greater the chance for long-range retention of that learning. This happens because each sense adds a source of input to the brain; and the greater the frequency and diversity of input, the greater the likelihood of retention, according to Underwood. Movereover, in studies involving various senses, the more senses that are involved, the more likely that indepth processing will occur (Craik &

Lockhart, 1972). Thus, fun activities which involve many senses were created.

Development of Fun Activities

Brainstorming was the method used to think up original ideas for these activities. Any one of the writers on the staff felt free to ask the group to stop, listen, and cooperate in generating new ideas for a Fun Activity. This brainstorming was a welcome break for the group, providing them with their own "fun activity."

The criteria used to develop these activities were that the materials were a) to be fun, b) to be of high interest, c) to apply the concepts contained within the objective, d) to be provocative but unthreatening to teachers and students, and e) to involve manipulatives, if possible.

Description

The fun activities in CMLR/LS units appear in several different places within the units. The first type to be described, the Ungraded Optional Activities (OPS) appear as part of the instructional activities, before the Formative Test. The Ops provide immediate applications of memorable events that aid students in remembering problem-solving strategies or other skills learned in earlier instructional activities. The OPS are usually done as a class or in small groups, and range from group to individual activities and from discussions to written activities. Since CMLR/LS is so highly structured, the teacher is bound to follow the sequence of instruction in the Student/Activities. The OPS, however, present the teacher with a choice. The teacher has the option of not using the OPS if the students already know the material well enough; if the teacher feels uncomfortable with the

material; if the teacher wants to accelerate the unit because of time pressure. Conversely, the teacher may choose to use the fun activitiy just as it is or he/she can enhance the activitiy with variations that are pertinent to the class' ability and/or needs.

Example: The Ungraded Optional Activitiy for a unit titled Mood, deals with how people in real life and how characters in books express their feelings in a variation of the old parlor game of charades. In a previous activity the students learned about how people use body language and tone of voice to express their feelings, and how authors describe their characters' body language and tones of voice to indicate their feelings.

The games goes as follows: A student acts out a mood using a specific part of the body only -- eyes, say, or mouth or hands -- and the class then guesses what mood is being expressed. Guesses are listed on the board. The teacher then explains which guess was correct, and discusses the other guesses as synonyms. A student acting out horror might bring forth synonyms like terror, fright, pain, and so forth. In this way students learn vocabulary equivalents for various moods as well as how the moods which are expressed. (See Appendix A.)

This game thus gives the students an immediate application of a memorable event to aid them in expressing mood both visually and verbally.

Enrichment Activities

The Enrichment Activity (EA) is one of three options for those students who attain mastery on the Formative Test. These students may choose SQUIRT (Sustained, Quiet, Uninterrupted Reading Time) the EA, or peer tutoring. The EA is designed to be a reward. This activity addresses the unit objective(s) but is especially challenging and imaginative, and so goes

beyond the level of those objectives. Since the teachers must work with students who did not attain mastery, the EA has a minimum of teacher direction. EA's involve a range of activities such as creative writing, crossword puzzles, games, and so forth.

Example: The EA for a unit on how to read road maps has the students draw a map of their immediate neighborhood, writing in street names and noting major buildings such as restaurants, schools, and stores. They then write an essay or story describing their neighborhood, including the people who live there and any special event, such as parades, block parties, and meetings. (See Appendix B.)

This EA thus gives students who have attained mastery a chance to apply the skills they have learned to their own lives. This personal involvement means a challenging reward for the student, taking him or her beyond the unit objectives of reading maps to actually making a map and tutoring it into an essay. Since this activity is self-explanatory, teachers are freed to give extra help to non-mastery students.

The Subject-Related Application

The Subject-Related Applications (APPS) are meant to be used at any time after completion of the unit, preferably after a lapse of several weeks, as a review of the strategies learned for each objective. These activities are usually experiential and aim to relate the skills learned in the unit to various subject areas. The activities are applied to social studies, language arts, science, and the fine arts. Some of the APPS are individual but most of them are group assignments. APPS may involve discussion and/or writing.

Example: One of the Subject-Related Applications for a unit that teaches students how to make inferences from facts includes instruction for an exercise a social studies teacher might for use a current events session. Students are to look at headlines selected from the daily papers and make inferences from the facts given there, stating also their reasons for making each inference. They then read the stories to check the accuracy of their inferences. This gives them practice in the inference process they learned in the unit, and guides them in applying it to a part of daily experiences - reading newspapers. Thus the Subject-Related Applications provide a review of skills learned in the unit by applying the skills experientially in a subject area. (See Appendix C.)

Conclusion

Mastery Learning in general has been critized for relying on a pencil-and-paper approach to learning. The units follow set patterns which critics suggest may lead to boredom. By incorporating fun activities into the format at strategic points in the units, we hope to address this criticism and strengthen the learning experience of the students by providing memory pegs which will aid in comprehension, memory, and transfer.

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MOOD
Student Activity #2
An Ungraded Optional Activity

A. Rationale

This activity is essentially a variation of charades. You give selected students a gesture to "act out" and the remaining students try to guess what the gesture is. This game serves three purposes: 1) to help the students see that various feelings may be communicated by specific body gestures; 2) to increase the vocabulary for mood words, and 3) to provide visual referents for mood words.

B. Advance Preparation

Make a xerox copy of the charade cards on SA-2-3 through 4. Cut out each card.

C. Instructions To Get the Game Started

1. Explain to the students that the class will play a game like charades. Some students will be given a Charade Card asking them to "act out" a specific body gesture-- an eye gesture, a mouth gesture, a voice gesture and so on. The rest of the class will try to guess what mood or feeling the gesture expresses.

2. Explain the procedures to the students:

   a. I will pass out Charade Cards to those of you who would like to act out the gestures. These students will be the "demonstrators." They will have 1-2 minutes to read their card and think of how they will act out the gesture. Note: Most cards have a hint if you get stuck, but feel free to be creative in your "act."

   b. In a couple of minutes I will call for the first demonstration. Each demonstrator may tell the class what type of gesture he or she will be demonstrating: an eye gesture, mouth, voice, or body gesture. But that is all the demonstrators may say. Then he or she must demonstrate his/her gesture. (Allow 30 seconds to a minute for each demonstration.) Note: To be certain that each student uses only that part of the body that is specified on the Charade Card, it is important to remind the students to follow the Charade Card instructions exactly. Thus, if the Card calls for an Eye Cue with the mouth covered, you should be sure that the student covers his/her mouth before the demonstration.

D. Increasing Mood Vocabulary

The Mood Vocabulary Chart of the answer key provides (1) a list of acceptable answers that the students would be likely to give as they try to guess what each gesture expresses and (2) additional synonyms or phrases that might be new vocabulary for the students.

How to Use the Chart (For Each Demonstration)

1. Explain to the students that there are many possible answers besides the Mood Word stated on the Charade Card.

2. As the students try to guess what mood or feeling Gesture #1 expresses, list all acceptable answers on the board in a column.

MOOD
Student Activity #2

3. When the students can add no more to the list, let the demonstrator tell the class what the Mood Word was.

4. Then read to the class the New Vocabulary Equivalents and write them on the board as a list next to the answers the students gave. You may want to add any words you can think of to the new vocabulary list.

5. Explain how all of the terms are related. See explanatory notes on the chart. Emphasize that all the words and phrases on the board are synonyms or equivalent phrases for the Mood Word and that whenever they read those words in stories, they should visualize the characters making those or similar gestures.

6. Repeat steps 1,2, and 3 for each Charade Card. You may wish to list and explain the New Vocabulary Equivalents only for selected Mood Words.

1. Eye Gesture: PLEASURE	2. Eye Gesture: BOREDOM
(Cover your mouth before demonstrating.)	(Cover your mouth before demonstrating.)
When people look pleased, their eyes are smiling. Sentence Context: Terry looked pleased when he heard that his friend had arrived. Hint: Smile with your mouth. Even though it is covered by your hand, your eyes will sparkle and lines like crow's feet will appear at the outer corners of your eyes. You can feel these with your other hand.	When people look bored, their eyes are usually dull and they do not look directly at each other. Their eyelids may be half closed. Sentence Context: Anita had been waiting for the bus for 20 minutes. It was so boring. Hint: Act as though you are waiting for someone and you are very bored.
3. Body Gesture: IMPATIENCE	**4. Eye Gesture: FEELING TRANQUIL**
	(Cover your mouth before demonstrating.)
To be impatient means to be annoyed because of a delay. Someone who is impatient usually a. glances frequently at the clock b. frowns c. taps his/her foot or fingers. Sentence Context: Tara was going to see her favorite Aunt after school. She waited impatiently for the bell to ring. Hint: Act as though you can't wait for the bell to ring because you are meeting a friend.	Tranquil means calm, peaceful. A person who is tranquil usually looks directly at a person or thing with a steady gaze. Sentence Context: When he was worried, Mark often sat on the fire escape and watched the sunset. Gradually, his worries would fade and he would feel tranquil. Hint: Act as though you are watching a beautiful sunset. Try to "see" the sunset in your mind like a picture.

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MOOD
Student Activity #2

5. Mouth Gesture: SNEER
(Cover your eyes before demonstrating.)

To sneer means to show scorn or dislike with a smile that is "curled" (on one side of the face only).

Sentence Context: Harry sneered. He enjoyed watching Lou take the blame for what they had done last night.

Hint: Smile, on one side of your face, as though you hated someone. (Imagine you are looking at an arch enemy.)

6. Mouth Gesture: JOY
(Cover your eyes before demonstrating.)

People often express joy with a broad, "round" smile-- as if they were saying "Oh!" and smiling at the same time.

Sentence Context: Helen plunged into the spring. It was icy cold and refreshed her tired body. Somehow she felt a sense of joy.

Hint: Act as if you got everything you wanted for your birthday.

7. Body Gesture: PRAYER

There are many different ways to pray. One way is to kneel and bend your head forward (eyes closed). The hands are often folded together with the palms touching. Another way of praying (for Moslems) is to kneel and touch the floor with one's head.

Sentence Context: Mark prayed for a miracle to save the life of his friend.

8. Body Gesture: CHEERING

People often jump up and down and clap their hands when they cheer. Or, they lean forward and make a thrusting (forward) motion with one arm, the hand closed in a fist.

Sentence Context: Ola cheered as her team made the winning point.

Hint: Act as if you were cheering at a ball game.

9. Body Gesture : PHYSICAL PAIN

A person in great pain usually grimaces (screws up his/her face). Or, sometimes a person may grab or clutch at the part of his/her body that is hurt.

Sentence Context: Pepsi screamed with pain as the box fell on his arm.

10. Body Gesture: TENDERNESS

People usually treat those people or pets they love dearly with tenderness. Tenderness may be shown by smiling eyes and a gentle touch.

Sentence Context: Ted's feelings of tenderness toward the newborn kitten showed in the careful way he picked it up.

11. Body Gesture: DEEP SORROW

Like anger, sorrow may be expressed silently with dull staring eyes, sagging shoulders and a slow, dragging walk. Or, you could throw yourself on a chair and pretend to wail (crying and moaning).

Sentence Context: He knew that destroying the mother cat was better than letting her live in pain, but he felt a sense of deep sorrow.

12. Body Gesture: SHAME

Young people especially tend to stare at the floor. Their shoulders may droop (sag) and they may twist their hands together behind their backs.

Sentence Context: C.F. was ashamed that he had lied to Carla.

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Name _____ Teacher _____

ROADS MAP
Enrichment Activity
No Answer Key

A. Draw a Map

Using a separate sheet of paper DRAW a map of your neighborhood. It will help if you VISUALIZE (make a mental picture) of your neighborhood. Here are are some suggestions for making your map.

1. Make your map cover about a 4 block area. If some blocks are very long or very short you can take that into account. Also if there is some special street or building more than a few blocks away, you may want to cover more than 4 blocks in your map.

2. WRITE in the street names on your map. DRAW in and NAME the major buildings in your neighborhood. For example, you might have a grocery store, laundry, school, restaurant, other stores, a church, large apartment buildings or office buildings, a park, or playgrounds that you want to include.

B. Write a Descriptive Essay or Story

1. Write an Essay Describing Your Neighborhood. Some examples of what you might include are:

   a. A description of what the neighborhood looks like physically. Include such things as landscapes, buildings, parks, major business streets. You might take your reader on a walking tour of your neighborhood.

   b. A description of the types of people who live in your neighborhood. You may describe some individual people as examples. Refer to the map to show where they live or work.

   c. Describe any special events that take place in your neighborhood, such as parades, neighborhood meetings, picnics, etc. Refer to your map to show where these special events take place.

2. Write a Story about Your Neighborhood. Make up or tell a true story about something that happened in your neighborhood. Be sure to:

   a. tell what happened.
   b. tell what caused it to happen.
   c. tell who the people were and what they had to do with what happened.

INFERENCES FROM FACT
Subject-Related Applications

Social Studies: Inferences from Headlines

Direct the students to take a daily newspaper and look for headlines that suggest inferences. That is, have them ask themselves if the facts in a given headline suggest anything specific. This is best explained by referring to the example below. Have them write each headline and, below it, their inferences and their reasons for making them. Be sure that they read only the headlines and not the stories following.

Example: Headline $50 -$500 FINES PROPOSED FOR LIBRARY BOOK HOARDERS

Inference #1 Some people do not return books to the library when they should.

Reasoning Fines are for punishing people who don't return books.

Inference #2 Some people are keeping books out for months and even years beyond when they are due.

Reasoning The fines are so large probably because the people have kept the books out for so long.

You can then select certain student papers for review and discussion, and read some of the accompanying newspaper stories to see if the inferences were correct. You might also direct the students to do the same thing for bold-face headings in their social studies textbooks.

Art: Inferences from Drawings and Paintings

Direct the students to go through the same procedure as that listed for social studies, using drawings and paintings of scenes that suggest inferences.

Science: Plant Experiment

This experiment is similar to those described in Student Activity 4 (Cause and Effect Inferences). It will give the students an opportunity to observe the effects on plant growth of varying amounts of sunlight, water, and fertile soil, and to make inferences from their observations. Proceed as follows:

1. Direct the students to plant bean seeds in pots or cups. For some plants, use ordinary soil; for others, use richer, fertilized soil, marking the pots to show which is which.
2. Set the plants out so that they will receive varying amounts of sunlight and mark each accordingly.
3. See that the plants receive different amounts of water, and mark each accordingly.
4. Keep track of the growth of each plant by noting growth characteristics--height, color, number of leaves -- every week or so.
5. After 6-10 weeks, examine the results and discuss what can be inferred about the influences of soil content, sunlight, and water on the growth of green plants.

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